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Major-general George H. Thomas

Of the Army of the United States

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OF THE

ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES.

LOYAL, COURAGEOUS, INCORRUPTIBLE.

HONORS FROM AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.

FEBRUARY, 1898.

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MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS.

Born Southampton County, Virginia, July 31, 1816.

MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS.

MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS was undoubtedly one of the noblest figures in our Civil War. First, because — being a Virginian — he did not strike a blow at the mother who educated him, as so many did; second, because of his very wise and able conduct as an officer; and, lastly, because of his disinterested and noble conduct subsequently. I am, I suppose, the only person living seized of a certain fact illustrating this; and I feel impelled to make it public. After one of his important victories, resulting in the protection of Cincinnati, several gentlemen of that city made up a purse of $12,000, I think, to be presented to him. This he steadily refused to receive, stating that his principles obliged him to refuse to receive any pecuniary reward for doing his duty as a public officer. The approbation of his fellow-citizens was honor enough for him.

At the time I was reading Montesquieu's "Spirit of Laws." This great author writes : —

"In a popular state one spring is necessary; namely, virtue." (Book III., chap. iii.)

"Virtue is a self-renunciation which is always arduous and painful. This virtue may be defined the love of the laws and of our country. As this love requires a constant preference of public to private interest, it is the source of all the particular virtues; for they are nothing more than this very preference itself." (Book IV., chap. v.)

"Virtue in a republic is a most simple thing. It is a love for the republic: it is a sensation, and not a consequence of required knowledge,— a sensation that may be felt by the meanest as well as by the highest person in the State. When the common people adopt good maxims, they adhere to them steadier than those we call gentlemen. It is very rare that corruption commences with the former. Nay, they frequently derive from their imperfect light a stronger attachment to the established laws and customs." (Book V., chap. iv.)

"In a republic presents are odious, because virtue stands in no need of them. It is in conformity to republican ideas that

Plato ordered those who received presents for doing their duty to be punished with death. 'They must not take presents,' said he, 'neither for good or for evil actions.'" (Book V., chap. xvii.)

It seemed to me that General Thomas was illustrating these principles, and I sent copies of these words to him. I received an answer from him, thanking me, and approving of the ideas of the great French author. This letter I have unfortunately lost. There may be other officers that have done the same thing, but I do not know of it. What a reproof to the thousands of so-called veterans drawing the life-blood out of their country which they did nothing to defend, and hounding those who dare to protest against such conduct!

THE TOMB OF MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS.

Died San Francisco, Cal., March 28, 1870.

MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS graduated from West Point in 1840, served through the Seminole and Mexican Wars and the Civil War, and remained in the army till his death.

The portrait is from a photograph taken at Nashville in 1865, and now owned by William H. Lambert. We are permitted to present it here through the very great kindness of S. T. McClure Company and Paul Dana of New York.

He died March 28, 1870, in San Francisco, Cal.; was buried in "Oakwood," Troy, N.Y. The photograph of his monument was made by Mr. George B. Pattison of that city, and kindly presented to me for this purpose. The wreath was placed there by me.

B.

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